Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor

Organization Overview

Key Info

Social Entrepreneur: Sam Parker
Year Awarded: 2014
Issue Area Addressed: Health
Sub Issue Area Addressed: Clean Water, Living Conditions, Sanitation
Countries Served: Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Zambia
Website: http://www.wsup.com/
Twitter handle: wsupuk
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/wsupuk/
Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/user/WSUPUK

About the Organization
Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP) is a not-for-profit company that helps transform cities to benefit the millions who lack access to water and sanitation.

WSUP was created in 2005 as a response to the urban explosion that has left many cities unable to provide basic services, such as access to a toilet or drinking water, to low-income communities. They work alongside local providers, enabling them to develop services, build infrastructure, and attract funding so that they can reach low-income communities.

WSUP has a permanent presence in six countries and implements work on a project basis through their consultancy arm, WSUP Advisory. As the urban specialist in water and sanitation, WSUP is committed to sharing evidence and approaches so that their innovations can enable change around the world.

Since inception, WSUP has helped 15 million people access improved water and sanitation services.

In August 2017, Skoll Foundation invested US $2 million into WSUP’s SWEEP partnership in Bangladesh: an initiative which is enabling the private sector to provide fecal sludge management services in multiple cities, with the potential to benefit millions of low-income residents.

Impact

- Working with 10 utilities across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to set up dedicated teams that focus on serving low-income communities, benefiting millions of city residents.
- A partnership with the national utility JIRAMA has enabled one-third of the city of Antananarivo, Madagascar, to benefit from an improved water supply.
- Creation of the first financially viable fecal sludge management service in Bangladesh – enabling harmful human waste to be removed from low-income communities and be safely treated.

Path to Scale

Build Capacity in Existing Systems

Capacity building of service providers, such as utilities, municipal authorities and the private sector to enable creation and roll-out of financially viable services. Regulators and governments act to create an enabling environment which can support citywide coverage.

Social Entrepreneur
Graduating from Oxford University in 1983, Sam Parker started his career in business, working for six years in the agrochemical industry. In 1989, Sam visited a safe house for street children during a business trip to Sao Paolo, Brazil – and was overwhelmed by the challenge the children faced and was inspired to help. He promptly quit his job, started a foundation, and returned to live in the safe house for two years, where he learned how difficult systems change is and the importance of on-the-ground, community engagement. After that, Sam returned to business for 11 years at a UK-based commodity trading company and then, in 2002, he returned to the development sector with a role at International Save the Children Alliance. In 2006, Sam joined Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP) as its first CEO.

Sam left WSUP in early 2015 and is currently serving as the Director of the Shell Foundation. Neil Jeffery has succeeded Sam as CEO of WSUP and is leading the organization into the scaling phase of its lifecycle. Prior to WSUP, Neil worked closely with governments on a range of advocacy and policy issues, most recently as CEO of Renewable World, working to help provide energy for and with low income producers and consumers.

**Equilibrium Overview**

**Current Equilibrium**

For the first time in history, more than half of the global population lives in towns and cities. By 2050, that proportion is expected to rise to two-thirds with population growth happening most rapidly in urban areas of less developed regions. Almost 900 million city-dwellers worldwide already live in overcrowded slums or low-income settlements, with inadequate, often non-existent, water and sanitation services. This not only contributes to poor health conditions and undignified living but underpins so many other areas of development: education, especially among girls, employment, gender equality, climate resilience and the growth of an economy. According to the World Health Organization, poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) were responsible for 829,000 deaths from diarrheal disease in 2016 alone. Despite the progress under Sustainable Development Goal 6, we are not on target to achieve the goal of "Water and Sanitation for all by 2030." Of all the countries with less than 95% water coverage in 2015, only one in five is likely to achieve basic water services for all by 2030. Progress in sanitation is even worse, with only one in ten countries with less than 95% coverage in 2015 on track to achieve universal access. In the current equilibrium, there has been inadequate improvement in access to safe water and sanitation against rapid growth in slum populations around the world. Existing systems for access to safe water and sanitation are unable to meet the additional pressure created by this growth. Of the 2.1 billion people gaining access to improved sanitation since 1990, 70% live in urban areas, but high levels of population growth mean this translates to an improvement of just 3% in coverage. In 2017, 844 million people still lacked access to improved drinking water sources and 2.3 billion to improved sanitation facilities. In the existing equilibrium, traditional infrastructural investments into city services have typically benefitted only middle and high-income areas, failing to extend into low-income areas largely because utilities and municipal governments lack the incentives, technical capacity, communication engagement skills, and approaches necessary to service disorganized slums. The situation is compounded by a piecemeal approach, which tends to mobilize communities to run infrastructure and services that are difficult to sustain and replicate, because operating costs are subsidized, and utilities and municipal governments are not engaged in the change process. As a result, the
urban poor has inadequate access to clean water and sanitation services, contributing to a host of related issues including water-borne illness, open defecation, and unsanitary as well as unsafe living conditions. Governments pay little attention to servicing slum populations and sometimes do not even feel that it is their responsibility to help provide water and sanitation solutions for all its constituents.

New Equilibrium

In the new equilibrium all urban dwellers, including the poorest, enjoy affordable, high-quality water and sanitation services. Mandated service providers have the capacity and capabilities to deliver sustainable city-wide water and sanitation services, promote good hygiene and raise the environmental standards of low-income communities, with the goal of improving health and living standards for the urban poor. An enabling institutional framework is in place that sets clear responsibilities and provides resources including carefully designed regulation and government subsidies to ensure a sustainable balance between commercial viability for service providers and affordability for low-income consumers. There are incentives in place for service providers to deliver for low-income consumers (e.g. enhancing access to finance, promoting greater enforcement of existing directives, developing new regulation to encourage service extension, improving municipal-wide policy frameworks). Targeted service delivery models are developed to overcome barriers and gaps in service coverage. Governments and service providers replicate these models, channelling resources to the process, and this is complemented by international financial institutions directing funding to nationally owned models that effectively reach poor customers with quality services. With poor customers serviced with water and sanitation services, they will experience better health, dignity in using sanitation services, and cleaner as well as safer living conditions.

Innovation

WSUP addresses the challenges of urban water and sanitation through a five-pronged approach: Direct service and demonstration: WSUP partners with urban WASH service providers to deliver water and sanitation services for low-income urban communities. WSUP demonstrates new models which directly improve WASH coverage to slum communities. These projects are ‘laboratories’ for identifying viable solutions and ‘showcases’ for demonstrating them. WSUP’s solutions include new toilet technologies, context-optimized water kiosk technologies, fecal sludge management and delegated management models, low-income units for water utilities, and hygiene awareness and behavior change campaigns. Developing capacity in the public and private sectors: WSUP develops technical, business and operational capabilities and capacity of urban WASH service providers. Support typically includes technical assistance in asset management and developing Non-Revenue Water strategies to reduce water waste, financial and asset planning, access to finance, marketing, tariff structure, regulation, and contract design. Technical assistance is provided in WSUP’s six primary service countries and in non-core countries through WSUP Advisory, which is a for profit consulting arm of WSUP. Influencing and providing technical assistance: WSUP influences and strengthens the enabling environment for urban WASH, working with governments and regulators to improve policy and practice in order to overcome barriers and enhance incentives for improved water and sanitation services in low-income communities. Finance mobilization: A key objective of
WSUP is influencing and mobilizing public and private investment in urban WASH, and to help improve targeting and effectiveness of large-scale investment by financial institutions. WSUP mobilizes investments through four key sources of finance: International financial institutions: developing agreements with service providers, designing programs, and supporting delivery. Household finance: through the development of services that are appropriate to low-income customers, marketing these services, and developing flexible payment models. Public finance: by de-risking investment opportunities, increasing private sector engagement, and demonstrating government commitment to urban WASH. Private sector finance: through assisting domestic companies to develop viable business models that are attractive for investment. Research and publications: WSUP’s research increases knowledge on effective urban WASH solutions, generating an evidence-and-influence base to drive urban sanitation market development and policy change. In October 2016, with funding of GBP £4,000,000 from the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID)’s Research and Evidence Division, WSUP launched the Urban Sanitation Research Initiative. In line with WSUP’s 2016-2020 Business Plan, the Initiative’s research over the four-year period will aim to make a substantive contribution to achieving universal urban sanitation coverage in low-income contexts through research-into-policy in three of WSUP’s core countries (Bangladesh, Kenya, and Ghana). WSUP’s research will contribute to the evidence base available to in-country actors including national and city governments, major international donors and financing institutions. Dissemination into multiple new markets through WSUP Advisory: WSUP provides technical assistance to those seeking to improve water and sanitation services to low-income urban customers across the world. Some of this technical assistance is delivered through WSUP Advisory. WSUP Advisory has worked in several countries including India, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia, advising clients such as national and city governments, UN agencies municipal authorities and corporations with global footprint. More information about WSUP Advisory’s work can be found here: https://www.wsup.com/approach/wsup-advisory/

Ambition for Change

We seek to change the way that cities provide access to water and sanitation for low-income communities, improving health and living standards for the poorest residents.